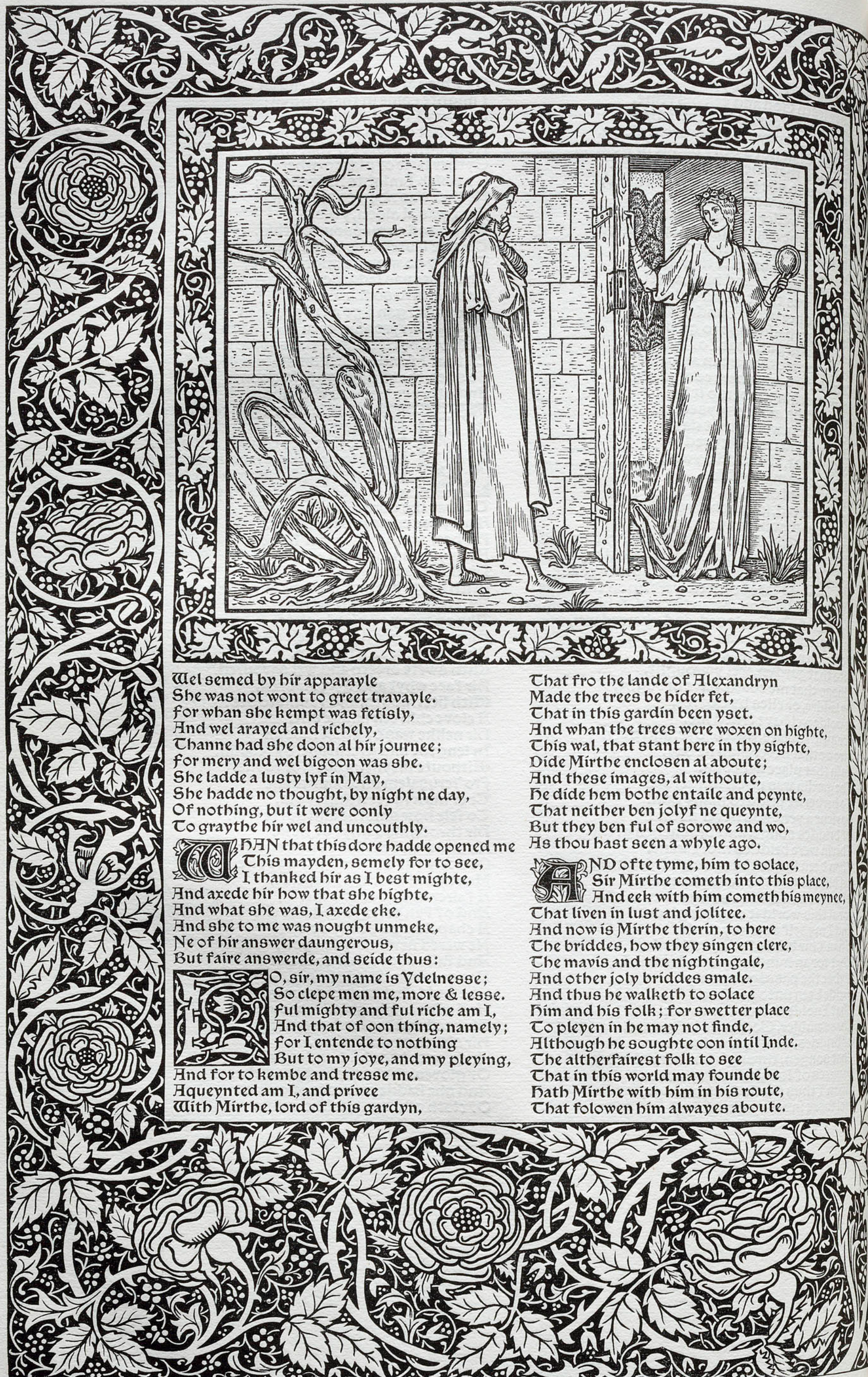




Wel semed by hir apparayle
She was not wont to greet travayle.
for whan she kempt was fetisly,
And wel arayed and richely,
Thanne had she doon al hir journee;
for mery and wel bigoon was she.
She ladde a lusty lyf in May,
She hadde no thought, by night ne day,
Of nothing, but it were oonly
To graythe hir wel and uncouthly.

WHAN that this dore hadde opened me
This mayden, semely for to see,
I thanked hir as I best mighte,
And axede hir how that she highte,
And what she was, I axede eke.
And she to me was nought unmeke,
Ne of hir answer daungerous,
But faire answerde, and seide thus:

IO, sir, my name is Ydelnesse;
So clepe men me, more & lesse.
ful mighty and ful riche am I,
And that of oon thing, namely;
for I entende to nothing
But to my joye, and my pleying,
And for to kembe and tresse me.
Aqueynted am I, and privee
With Mirthe, lord of this gardyn,

That fro the lande of Alexandryn
Made the trees be hider fet,
That in this gardyn been yset.
And whan the trees were woxen on highte,
This wal, that stant here in thy sighte,
Dide Mirthe enclosen al aboute;
And these images, al withoute,
He dide hem bothe entaile and peynte,
That neither ben jolyf ne queynte,
But they ben ful of sorowe and wo,
As thou hast seen a whyle ago.

AND ofte tyme, him to solace,
Sir Mirthe cometh into this place,
And eek with him cometh his meynne,
That liven in lust and jolitee.
And now is Mirthe therin, to here
The briddes, how they singen clere,
The mayis and the nightingale,
And other joly briddes smale.
And thus he walketh to solace
Him and his folk; for swetter place
To pleyen in he may not finde,
Although he soughte oon intil Inde.
The altherfairest folk to see
That in this world may founde be
Hath Mirthe with him in his route,
That folowen him alwayes aboute.

WHEN Ydelnesse had told al this,
And I hadde herked wel, ywis,
Than seide I to dame Ydelnesse:
Now also wisly God me blesse,
Sith Mirthe, that is so fair and free,
Is in this yerde with his meynne,
fro thilke assemblee, if I may,
shal no man werne me today,
That I this night ne mote it see.
for, wel wene I, ther with him be
A fair and joly companye
fulfilled of alle curtesye.
And forth, withoute wordes mo,
In at the wiket wente I tho,
That Ydelnesse hadde opened me,
Into that gardyn fair to see.

AND whan I was therin, ywis,
Myn herte was ful glad of
this.
for wel wende I ful sikerly
have been in paradys
erthely;
So fair it was, that, trusteth
wel,
It semed a place espirituel.
for certes, as at my devys,

Ther is no place in paradys
so good in for to dwelle or be
As in that Gardyn, thoughte me;
for there was many a brid singing,
Throughout the yerde al thringing.
In many places were nightingales,
Alpes, finches, and wodewales,
That in her swete song delyten
In thilke place as they habytyn.
Ther mighte men see many flokkes
Of turtles and of laverokkes.
Chalaundres fele saw I there,
That wery, nigh forsongen were.
And thrustles, terins, and mavys,
That songen for to winne hem prys,
And eek to sormounte in hir song
These other briddes hem among.
By note made fair servyse
These briddes, that I you devyse;
They songe hir song as faire and wel
As angels doon espirituel.
And, trusteth wel, whan I hem herde,
full lustily and wel I ferde;
for never yit swich melodye
Was herd of man that mighte dye.
Swich swete song was hem among,
That me thoughte it no briddes song,
But it was wonder lyk to be
Song of mermaydens of the see;
That, for her singing is so clere,
Though we mermaydens clepe hem here
In English, as in our usaunce,
Men clepen hem sereyns in fraunce.
Ententif weren for to singe
These briddes, that nought unknuninge
Were of hir craft, and apprentys,
But of hir song sotyl and wys.

And certes, whan I herde hir song,
And saw the grene place among,
In herte I wex so wonder gay,
That I was never erst, er that day,
So jolyf, nor so wel bigo,
Ne mery in herte, as I was tho.
And than wiste I, and saw ful wel,
That Ydelnesse me served wel,
That me putte in swich jolitee.
hir freend wel oughte I for to be,
Sith she the dore of that gardyn
hadde opened, and me leten in.
from hennesforth how that I wroughte,
I shal you tellen, as me thoughte.
first, wherof Mirthe served there,
And eek what folk ther with him were,
Withoute fable I wol deseryve.
And of that gardyn eek as blyve
I wol you tellen after this.
The faire fasoun al, ywis,
That wel ywrought was for the nones,
I may not telle you al at ones:
But as I may and can, I shal
By ordre tellen you it al.
ful fair servyse and eek ful swete
These briddes maden as they sete.
Layes of love, ful wel sowning
They songen in hir jargoning;
Summe highe and summe eek lowe songe
Upon the braunches grene yspronge.
The sweetnesse of hir melodye
Made al myn herte in reverdye.
And whan that I hadde herd, I trowe,
These briddes singing on a rowe,
Than mighte I not withholde me
That I ne wente in for to see
Sir Mirthe; for my desiring
Was him to seen, over alle thing,
his countenance and his manere:
That sighte was to me ful dere.

WHEN I wente I forth on my right hond
Down by a litel path I fond
Of mentes ful, and fenel grene;
And faste by, withoute wene,
Sir Mirthe I fond; and right anon
Unto sir Mirthe gan I goon,

Theras he was, him to solace,
And with him, in that lusty place,
So fair folk and so fresh hadde he,
That whan I saw, I wondred me
fro whennes swich folk mighte come,
So faire they weren, alle and some;
for they were lyk, as to my sighte,
To angels, that ben fethered brighte.

THIS folk, of which I telle you so,
Upon a carole wenten tho.
A lady caroled hem, that highte
Gladnes, the blisful and the lighte;
Wel coude she singe and lustily,
Non half so wel and semely,
And make in song swich refreininge,
It sat hir wonder wel to singe.
hir vois ful cleer was and ful swete.

The
Romaunt
of the
Rose

Sir
Mirthe

Glad-
nesse